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## THE LIBERAL MOVEMENT AND MISSIONS

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In an article recently published in this *Journal*,<sup>1</sup> passing allusion was made to the relation of theological liberalism to missions. It was said that the revival of missionary spirit in Protestantism which marked the eighteenth century was within pietistical circles. For the missionary achievements of the nineteenth century, the churches described as orthodox have been almost solely responsible. The missionary problem which we face at the beginning of the twentieth century is still felt to be a problem in which conservatives mainly can be expected to take interest. Liberal ecclesiastical bodies have sustained missionary endeavor in but slight degree. The liberal element within the so-called orthodox churches has often found itself out of sympathy with the missionary policy of these churches. It has frequently been excluded from the counsels of the churches in missionary matters. It has as frequently excluded itself. Zeal for missions has been popularly regarded as one of the marks of the reactionary or else ecclesiastically minded portion of the various denominations, and one of the glories of the conservative element in the church as a whole. Hostility to missions, lack of sympathy with the aims, dissent from the methods of those eager in this propaganda have been almost a party badge of so-called liberal Christianity.

These facts are in themselves interesting. They account for the aversion which many earnest supporters of missions feel toward liberalism and the anxiety with which its progress is viewed. They account for the fact that some liberals, though kindled to enthusiasm in certain efforts for the welfare of nations, as for example in medical work, education, international peace, yet would never suffer that enthusiasm to be interpreted as an interest in foreign missions.

<sup>1</sup> "Modern Liberalism and That of the Eighteenth Century," *American Journal of Theology*, January, 1912, pp. 1 ff.

An endeavor which is certainly closely related to these just named, and which, in our day, at least, demands in highest measure insight, intelligence, and breadth of sympathy, fails often to draw to its support men who reveal all of these qualities in their work for religion at home. The missionary personnel in the field is made up indeed in some measure of those who desire to avoid any departure from the traditional. It includes also some upon whose minds the exigencies of the situation, for example in China, have forced the necessity of most radical and far-reaching changes in aim and policy. The missions are thus often not at one within themselves. Actual stress in the field makes many missionaries quick in adaptation and ready for innovation in a degree which would amaze their calumniators. Such men have, however, only too good cause to be anxious lest a step which they have deemed necessary abroad may alienate the support of conservative givers at home.

This situation has been judged by the editors of the *American Journal of Theology* to be of sufficient interest to warrant request on their part for special discussion. The question is indeed but a part of the general subject with which the former article sought to deal, namely, that of the religious efficiency of liberalism. Why has religious liberalism in the past been so largely impotent in this important relation of the missionary activity of Christendom? Is the awakening of liberals to interest in this activity a thing to be desired? Or may the missions view it rather with fear? We may say, indeed, as in the last article, that much liberalism, in the past, has been inadequately furnished with religion. It is therefore not wonderful that it did not embark upon missions. But is the missionary endeavor one which can make use of zeal only, of affection and enthusiasm, but not of the qualities of the more vigorous and progressive mind? We may admire zeal, be touched by enthusiasm, wonder at the achievements of a pure devotion. Equally we must mourn over the monstrosities and absurdities which fanaticism has been guilty of. If it were really to be conceded that in the service of missions there is no place for men of the freest and boldest mind, then we should have gone far to justify the hostility to missions which we lament. If, however, there are any problems in the world which demand for their solution the

highest qualities of mind as well as of character, they are the problems which are presented in the spiritual and ethical and social aspects of the impact of our western civilization upon the nations of the Orient today. If missions are the instrumentalities through which these higher phases of the life of the Orient are to be touched by the corresponding phases of the life of the West, then missions stand in need of no men so much as of those who will bring the largest learning, the freest and most constructive spirit to their work. If missions really do set themselves this task, they deserve the support of every man of insight and true liberalism. If they do not set themselves this task, then we may well deplore the fact that they preoccupy the ground, divert attention, waste resource, and render temporarily more difficult the creation of instrumentalities which will give themselves in freshness and originality to this endeavor.

The life of the West is now touching the life of the East on its lower side in irresistible and often lamentable fashion. But civilization is a whole. It will touch it upon its higher side as well. It will do this through the missions if these permit, without them if they refuse. The missions were first in the field. They have heroically endeavored to touch the highest side of the life of the East. They have done something for the other sides of life as well. We must not isolate them. They must not isolate themselves or deny the unity of the great movement and the indispensableness of its many parts. The writer is in a position to know that there are some men at home and many men in the field who are fully in sympathy with this point of view. He claims that, contrary to the popular notion, the missionary cause is already in its measure the exponent of a thoroughly liberal spirit. Furthermore, he deems that it can be made wholly clear that if we are to divide men and churches in the conventional way into conservative and liberal, it is the men and churches of the most liberal view which have most to contribute to the solution of the missionary problem as this problem now stands in every country which we can name. The contention is not that the liberals may be equally effective with the conservatives in the new era of missions. The contention is that they ought to be much more effective. The contention is that if they are not so it is

because of failure of religious earnestness on their own part, and not because of failure of affinity of elements in their general world-view with the missionary situation which now faces us. If there is always to be a superiority of Christian devotion, of zeal for God and love of man, on the side of the conservatives, if there is always to be a religious inferiority of liberals, then it will still be to the conservatives that we shall owe the best of the world's work. This will be, however, in spite of and not because of their conservatism. If, on the other hand, with anything approaching equal zeal, the free and fearless Christian mind of our generation sets itself to have a worthy share in this great task, both the peoples of the Orient and the Christians of the West will witness an advance in the direction, not necessarily of the prevalence of mere shibboleths, but in that of a true christianization, such as has not yet been seen. If by a liberal mind we mean the mind which has the largest historic comprehension of the meaning of its own faith, the most sympathetic and just comprehension of the faiths of other men, the fullest appreciation of the relation of religion to life and of this life and world to religion, then the liberal mind is just that which is most needed in the mission work of our day. It is just that which, granted always equal consecration, may be expected to be most speedily, most broadly, and most permanently successful in mission work. Or rather the liberal mind, in this best sense, is that without which no permanent work in the mission field can be expected. It is that without which much that has been accomplished in mission fields by the conservative mind will be destroyed. It is that without which all the blowing of trumps and advertising of crusades, all the catchwords and spending of money, even much of the outpouring of ill-judged devotion, will be in a large part vain.

To substantiate this opinion and in order that we may not speak vaguely, let us consider two points upon which the conservative and liberal views or, as we might term them, the traditional and the modern view of missions may be definitely contrasted. The first of these has to do with the question of the relation of missions to civilization, the relation of the propaganda for the faith to the work on behalf of education, in the interest

of medicine, of social amelioration, and of the improvement of economic conditions. The work of charity, philanthropy, reform, the address to the whole problem presented by the life of man in this world, is here contrasted with the effort to impart certain convictions, to cultivate certain feelings, to determine the attitude of the inner life, and to impart the hope of a life to come. It was a standing accusation of those interested in great humanitarian, civil, and social movements in the nineteenth century that those interested in missions put far too little emphasis upon the dreadful necessities of this sort which were yet so glaringly evident among all the peoples to whom missionaries went. It was, and still is, the impression of many that missionaries, ardently seeking the salvation of the souls of their converts, neglected the bodily miseries with which these converts were afflicted. They lent little aid to these in the poverty in which they were sunken and the degrading outward conditions by which they were surrounded. They inculcated only resignation when they should have taught revolt. They sought to convince men that all these outward things were indifferent so only that their souls were right with God. They did this while, in many cases, just as with the prisoners of poverty and degradation at home, it was almost inconceivable that their souls should be right with God so long as their outward lot and life remained so wretched and pitiable as it was.

One familiar with the literature of controversy concerning missions must be touched sometimes in his sense of humor. He may meet on the same page two objections. The first is that the missionaries have thus been guided, by a strange fanaticism for the inner life and their future state, to neglect duties much more obvious to a suffering and sodden humanity. And then, secondly, it is declared that all the converts whom the objector has ever seen were but "rice-Christians," pretenders and self-seekers, drawn to the missionary for the good things of this world which the latter showered upon them. Or again, we may find in one paragraph the accusation that missions have done nothing for social uplift, for enlightenment and needed reform among the peoples to whom they went. They have been too busy saving souls. Yet in the next sentence perhaps missionaries are responsible for all the troubles

which consuls have to adjust, for unrest, sedition, and revolution. They have furnished by their doings, or by the remoter consequences of their doings, occasion of serious differences between governments.

But, restraining our sense of humor, it is of course true that, in the large, those who were, at first, interested in modern missions were interested mainly in the salvation of souls. The literature of Pietism, and records of the Moravians, the sermons of Carey, the exhortations of the inaugurators of the American movement, Judson, Newell, Mills, the articles of the English Baptist Society, the charter of the London Missionary Society or of the American Board leave no doubt as to that. It was not a general program for human amelioration which was here had in mind. Not at all. It was a ministry to the souls of men through the gospel. It was the proclamation of the love of God as manifested in the atonement wrought by Jesus Christ. It was the proclamation of the insufficiency of everything else in the world, if a man had not the blessing which the gospel conferred. It was the proclamation of the sufficiency of these benefits if a man had nothing else in the world. The missionaries cannot be blamed for declaring this to the heathen. They believed it for themselves. They believed nothing else. They found all of their happiness in thus believing, in spite of every untoward circumstance in their lot. They wished to confer like happiness upon others. Upon "the heathen in his blindness" no greater boon ever was conferred or ever will be conferred than just this inward transformation which made him conscious victor over his state, no matter how horrible that state might be. No higher boon ever has been conferred upon any man, anywhere, than is this victory of the spirit. It is the identical boon which the gospel, on the lips and at the hands of Jesus, conferred. It is the boon in light of which Paul cried, "What things I counted gain, those I now count loss." It is the boon which the man in the most ameliorated condition of society still needs far more than he needs any other thing. It is the boon which if a man does not feel for himself, or wish to confer upon others, he simply shows that he does not know what religion is. It is, however, preposterous to suppose that this otherworldliness was the trait of missionaries only as they

went to foreign parts. It was the trait of the seriously minded in the home lands as well. They construed religion in these terms in India, because they construed it in these terms in England and America as well. Rationalists and radicals were alienated from the church at home on just this ground. They perceived that this construction of religion was too narrow. They were right. It was narrow. It contained possibilities of bigotry and fanaticism. But it was religion. A larger view of the world might modify it. But a truer, the truest view of the world, can never take its place. A world-view is never a substitute for religion. Amelioration is not redemption.

Meantime a larger view of the world has come to us. To a juster judgment of the relation of religion to the world we have come. It is one of the great achievements of the nineteenth century, this transformation in the interpretation of Christianity. The world has become the subject of redemption. The relation of all other aspects of the life of man to the life of his soul has been apprehended as it has never been apprehended before. The life of the body, the life of the mind, the life which men live in their trades and crafts, in their families and states, in their classes and masses, the life which men live in their labor and pleasures, this all has been taken up into the great enthusiasm of religion. The church at home is abused for not having earlier realized its privilege and obligation in these regards. A man of insight may quite frankly say that the greatest risk which the cause of religion, at the present moment, runs is that of coming to construe itself in no other terms than these. If it was once too otherworldly, it is clear that its peril is now of being too completely and entirely absorbed in ends and aims which begin and end in this life and world. The peril sometimes appears to be a real one, that the very gospel of God, the very enthusiasm for the divine, shall become only one more means for guaranteeing to every man his due share of every petty and sordid thing which his mundane soul lusts after. Let us not think that this wide arc is one which only the church at home has traversed. The missions have traversed it too.

It does not admit of question that the original impulse of



Protestant missions was one which concerned itself almost exclusively with the transcendent aspects of the life of man. The pietist has always stood over against this world in instinctive opposition to it, shrinking from many contacts with it, mistrustful of its powers, indifferent to its charms, untouched by many of its motives. The fervent evangelicals lived largely in and for another world. To the sincerest and profoundest of them man's little span of life in time was of but small significance compared with the eternity to which he moved. In the writings of David Brainerd, as he yearned over the American aborigines, one may make vivid to himself this whole frame of mind in its curious and yet vital relation to the Edwardean theology. Such men were absolutely indifferent to their own fate, so only that they were assured of their eternal salvation. What wonder if they were relatively indifferent to the outward lot and passing circumstance of their converts, and if they taught their converts to be thus indifferent as well. It is matter of history that the primary effect of this teaching was to make the little groups of converts, confident of the grace of God in the salvation of their souls, to stand over against the society from which they emerged, over against the state to which they were subject, against the religion which they had repudiated and which, in turn, repudiated them, in much the relation in which the earliest Christian converts stood to the Roman Empire. These things all belonged to a world doomed but to destruction. That world in its corruption, in its cruelty, its monstrous vices, and its mercilessness carried the seeds of its destruction within itself. There was no redemption of it, but only from it. Men were snatched as brands from the burning. Their duty to their fellows was fulfilled if they warned these and conjured them also to escape.

We ought not to imagine that these ideas were exclusively Christian. On the contrary, the Hindoo, at least, would have found them relatively familiar ideas. Had not Buddhism looked upon the world much in this same way? Had it also not taught flight from the world, the extinction of desire? Had it not striven to set forth the worthlessness of all that men seek after in the world and the futility of seeking here for worthy things? Had it not counted that it ministered salvation to those men whom it could

persuade to turn away from the world? Asceticism has always lain nearer to the oriental than to any occidental man. Mysticism has been more common. What we call the practical has seemed of less importance. Under this patience of the eastern mind, evils have perpetuated themselves which the western man would not endure for an hour.

Here comes out, however, one characteristic difference between our pietist or evangelical and the Orientals to whom he went. Those practical men of Europe and America never turned away from the world in the same sense in which the Buddhist had done. They might be looking for a kingdom of Heaven, those Baptists and Independents in Britain, those Congregationalists from New England. Yet their ancestors had fought through a civil war and a revolution to set up a democratic government on earth. Their political was hardly less strong than their religious sense. Civil liberty and freedom of conscience were but different aspects of the same contention. They were, however, many of them learned men, profoundly imbued with the sense of the value of education. The school was almost as sacred as the church. The teacher was as truly revered as the minister. Carey might be a cobbler, Sydney Smith might esteem him a fanatic. He was apparently a man of something approaching genius both as a linguist and as a man of affairs. Duff was so distinctly an educator that he would have been a sort of unofficial minister of public instruction in Scotland, if he had not been that in India. Cyrus Hamlin was a Yankee, descendant of a long line of those who had made a wilderness to blossom as the rose. He was a civilizer in the largest sense. He presented the combination, often nothing less than humorous, of extreme practicability with the very highest idealism. To say that such a man was a visionary of another world would imply at least that one had been so fortunate as not to have to oppose him in one of his cherished mundane schemes. His baking bread and taking measures against the plague, his diplomatic mastery over the Turk and equality with the ministers of Europe show him on another side. Peter Parker would have been a physician of eminence in his own country. As it was, he laid the foundation of western medicine in China. Many worthy men followed in his

steps. I cite only examples. These men, in spite of their characteristic view of religion some would say, addressed themselves to the problems of the nations in which their lot was cast. They addressed themselves to those problems as no natives of those countries were then doing. They addressed themselves to those problems in the teeth of the opposition of many of their own countrymen who, being so superior as to profess no religion, showed not one whit more inclination to touch the mundane miseries of the pagan than to deal with him for his sins. These latter were for the most part as indifferent to humanitarianism as they were to soul-salvation. They opposed both in the interests of trade, the former quite as fiercely as the latter. It is indisputable that it has been those who went out to give the light of the gospel, as they understood it, to the darkened souls of men, who have also, in overwhelming proportions, laid the foundations of the amelioration of the civil and social, of the intellectual and moral, of the economic and hygienic conditions of the peoples to whom they went. Upon these foundations men otherwise minded have indeed often built. Work which they inaugurated others have carried forward. A foreign government, like the British government in India, avails itself of that which the missionaries, whom they once persecuted, planned. A native government, like that of Japan, transforms itself according to ideas which missionaries were the first to make familiar. China and Turkey are today eagerly trying to do the same. Their aim is of course to become occidentalized without becoming Christian. The aim of many foreigners is to help them to that end.

We may hold no brief for our own civilization. We may see too clearly its glaring defects and monstrous faults. We may deplore the decline before it of much that was beautiful in the East. Still we cannot deny that the eastern nations are eager to get it, even if only for so sinister a reason as this, that it appears that they cannot sustain themselves against the barbarous aggression of the western powers without it. For this, many of the worst aspects of this impact of the West upon the East, the lust of conquest, the greed of commerce are to be blamed. Good merchants, just diplomatists, honorable soldiers, high-minded educators not

missionaries such also there have been and many of them from the West, in the East. Townsend Harris, Chinese Gordon, Lord Dalhousie, and Lord Cromer are not forgotten. For many of the best aspects of the contact of East and West the missions are, however, gratefully acknowledged as responsible. The war of creeds, intolerance toward native religions, the endeavor to enforce the claim of an absolute Christianity, the provincialism of denominations, and the bigotry of ecclesiastics, these constitute often the dark side of the picture. But the achievement, direct and indirect of missions in civilization, the contribution to the transformation of this present world and to the welfare of mankind in this world, is too obvious that the old childish misrepresentation should any longer pass current. It is too naïve to be even respectable.

We have swung from one extreme to the other. Christians have repented them of their otherworldliness, even those who had but little of the genuine article of that quality to be repented of. Those who want nothing but civic righteousness and social salvation, economic redemption, commercial ethics, the gospel of hygiene and eugenics, the divine ministry of comfort and even of leisure and pleasure are much in evidence. Phrases like these are the rallying-cry of movements within the church, and of men without it who would lay down a program for it. They are the watchwords of agitation, the catchwords of popular appeal. The contention here involved is partly valid. It is of vast significance in the new interpretation of religion, although, in the light of what has just been said, the interpretation is not so new as some suppose. What is new is mainly the isolation of the contention. That isolation is false. The contention may answer as a corrective of one-sidedness. It intimates enlarged scope in the application of religion. As an exclusive view of religion, or as a substitute for religion, it is ridiculous, stupid, and dangerous. Viewed in this exclusive light it is the negation of religion. It is the prostitution of religion. Agitation of this sort may be indulged with a clear mind by those who are willing to harness religion, as they have endeavored to harness everything else, to the car of the one kind of progress which they understand. It is more likely to be indulged in with an unclear mind by those who indeed hold religion dear, but who are frightened

and have grown uncertain of the real nature of their own cause. The result for the moment is much the same.

Much that is of questionable value is being said and done in religion's name. Philosophers like Eucken and James have sounded the recall. It is essentially a recall from the exclusively ethical or humanitarian, from the civil and social, from the intellectual or economic, to the indefeasible religious element. Men of affairs, outside of all religious associations, see whither we are tending. They do not respect us the more for coming so near to the betrayal of our own cause. It is interesting to hear this recall upon the mission field as well. A few years ago there appeared in the most typical of the liberal magazines an arraignment of missions from this salutary point of view. The writer was a Scottish physician, a lifelong resident of India. He gloried in the fact that he had never sympathized with missions. His assault upon them had the merit of originality and the incidental virtue of some verisimilitude. He wrote of what he had seen. He took his text from the effort to transform the Hindoo into a healthy Anglo-Saxon college boy. He spoke caustically of gymnasiums and tennis and polo as means of transformation of men's souls. He threw light from this new angle upon the insularity which assumes that what takes place on our own college green must take place in all the earth, and on the moon if we can compass it. He commented instructively on the zeal for reforming the life of the Oriental upon points which the Occidental, in blissful unconsciousness, believes to be of axiomatic worth, but for which the Indian has neither need, understanding, nor desire. The heart of his censure is in the statement that we thus offer in the name of Christianity much that has no relation to Christianity or indeed to any religion whatsoever. We are guilty, moreover, of offering it to a race which knows what religion is rather better than we seem always ourselves to do. We offer in the name of religion nostrums and panaceas for trivial and sordid ills which the Hindoo knows to be trivial and sordid, which his religion has taught him to ignore. If we should have succeeded in transforming the Hindoos, one and all, after this plan, it would have been only to transform them into sensitive and ambitious worldlings like ourselves. We should have secularized

in the name of the modern Christ a race to which the ancient Buddha already taught the meaning of the transcendent and the insignificance of the world to the man whose soul is right.

Allow for some exaggeration here. Admit that we have a somewhat rosy view of the effect of Hindoo religion on men's minds. Concede that the writer parodies Christianity. Yet there is much to give us pause. When one compares this with the old accusation that missions in their zeal for soul-salvation did nothing for the needs of men's bodies and their lot, one is reminded of the word of One who felt that he had piped unto men and they had not danced and mourned unto them and they had not lamented. Nevertheless here is much wholesome truth. One may keep his soul in the midst of a very miserable world. One may lose it in the midst of a very comfortable one. Some of those who most completely lose their souls are not those who have the comforts, but are merely sufficiently set on obtaining them. If Buddha taught men this, it would be indeed a pity that the emissaries of Christ should undo the benefit of the teaching. Religion may be one of the great creators of civilization. It creates civilization, however, only as a by-product. It is not created by civilization, though it is sometimes thus profitably amended. What it was meant to create is manhood, character, personality, victorious in any circumstance, victorious over all circumstances. In our precipitancy we should not forget that religion is the only remedy that we have against the inherent tendency of higher civilization to destroy manhood, character, and personality. Nothing is more evident than is this truth in our own nation, where yet the civilization which has been the slow achievement of our own ancestors has been paid for in blood and tears which are not altogether forgotten. How much more must this be true in the case in which a complex civilization has been, not evolved, but simply appropriated, where it has not grown up as part of the nation's life but is simply put on like a new and gaudy but ill-fitting coat. How much more must this be true where the moral sanctions, such as they were, of an ancient civilization, such as it was, have given way before the advent of an alien civilization which only in part has brought its moral sanctions with it. How much more must this be the case where the civilization is wanted,

and the sanctions not. Natives and anti-Christian foreigners may be deluded into believing that the civilization can stand without the sanctions. The history of the world is against them.

It is absurd to suppose that we can go back to that apprehension of the gospel wherein the present life and world stood for nothing and the transcendent world with the inner life, for all. But the same kind of narrow mind which was the slave of the old notion in its exclusiveness is most likely to be the victim of the new obsession in its portentous isolation. The same kind of mind which offered nostrums then will offer nostrums still. What difference does it make that they were then theological panaceas whereas now they are sociological ones? There are not any panaceas. If men once lulled sin-sick souls with thoughts of an atonement purely external to their own moral life, and crooned about imputed righteousness, is it any better that we should now croon about soup and social rights? If conservatism means that first and liberalism means that last, there really is not much to choose. There is also not much to hope. What is needed is that kind of ministry to character, that kind of alchemy of character, which none among men has ever so exemplified as did Jesus Christ, but which all true followers of Christ seek to exemplify. It is the alchemy which can make a son of God and a saint out of the most forlorn being in an untransformed world, but which will also infallibly set that saint upon the transformation of his world.

There is, however, a second set of fundamental questions which modern missions have revealed. These too are questions which were hardly upon the horizon of the men with whom the movement had its inception. With reference to these it would seem to be even more clear that the liberal movement is at advantage in dealing. These are questions relating to the interpretation of our own religion, the attitude which we assume toward other religions and the expectations which we cherish as to the influence our religion is to exert upon the others. These are questions as to the form which our own faith is itself to take, the naturalization and assimilation which it is to undergo, if it is ever to cease to be an exotic, and is to become a native faith and an indigenous loyalty among those to whom it has been brought.

It does not admit of question that the pioneers of the missionary movement believed in their own Christian religion as an absolute religion, *the* absolute religion, the one faith whereby men could be saved. They viewed the ethnic religions as more or less completely erroneous, mere creation of the darkened minds and superstitious fears of men, or the bare fragments of a lost and almost forgotten revelation from God. One and all were of evil, misleading, soul-destroying. One and all were to be displaced by the real religion, that of Jesus. The zealots were, for the most part, not aware that in thus arguing they were departing from the nobler tradition of the Christian apologetic, as exhibited in Clement of Alexandria and Origen. They forgot all about the witness of "the soul naturally Christian." They followed rather the tradition of the Roman Church, which on most points they so sincerely hated.

Finally, with their allegiance to the ecumenical creeds and the great reformation symbols as embodying the gospel as this fell in original purity from Jesus' lips, with their sense that their own form of government, episcopal, presbyterian, whatever it might be, or that their mode of baptism, their ritual of worship or their lack of it, was guaranteed in the words of an oracular inspiration, they could not but expect that the church in China or the Ottoman Empire, in Africa or the South Sea Islands, would assume the form which it had in England or New England, and would always keep that form. Curiously enough the Roman missions, which one would have imagined more rigid in their conformity to tradition than the Protestant, have yet shown upon occasion far greater spirit of accommodation within the area of ritual and sometimes of moral practice. This has been especially true under the guidance of the Jesuits. The reason has been, however, one which was the farthest removed from the recognition of the historic relativity of the standards of faith and practice in the Roman church itself. For Protestants the absolute character of the revelation contained in the Holy Scripture was a practically unviolable presupposition. The view of the Scriptures and of other faiths which was taking shape under the hands of Lessing and Herder never touched the Pietists. Evangelicals would have thought as hardly of Coleridge for one reason as did Newman for another. Those mitigations of the doctrine



of the atonement which Campbell offered were far from commending him to Chalmers and the leaders of the Free Church missionary propaganda. Yet these all would seem to us to make easier and not more difficult the approach to the non-Christian mind. It was not ease of approach of the non-Christian mind to Christianity which by those elder worthies was sought. It was submission and subjection of that mind before Christianity which was demanded. It was not mediation between two sets of ideas which was desired. It was the displacement of the one series by the other which was designed. Here again, in the notions of an oracular scripture and an exclusive faith, were ideas not unfamiliar to the peoples among whom the missionaries went. Thus the Mohammedan thought concerning the Koran. He believed, if possible more ardently, in the uniqueness and sole authority, in the absolute truth and rightfulness of the religion of the prophet. The Jew thought just so concerning Moses. The Confucian, with modifications, judged thus of Confucius and the Great Wisdom. The idea that all religions are but manifestations of the one seeking of man after God, if haply they may find him, and of God's having not left himself without witness among men, was a thought alien not merely to Catholics, to Pietists, and to Evangelicals. It would have been felt to be a blasphemous suggestion of deistical minds to which no religion was really sacred. The Moslem's view of his own religion would have been thought more natural than this lax view of any.

The scientific study of the history of religions is a development largely of the last generation. The philosophy of religion within that same period may be said to have undergone a revolution. Students of the last twenty years have had a chance to become conversant with these themes. Points of contact and of contrast in the great faiths of men appeal to us in a manner widely different from that which our fathers understood. Quite apart from such studies, experience in the field affects the minds of devoutest emissaries of Christianity in a way which would once have been esteemed hardly consonant with loyalty. I hinted that this change was perhaps taking place more rapidly among missionaries abroad than among ardent supporters of missions at home. These last are some of them, moved neither by studies nor experience. Sym-

pathetic appreciation of the religious views, of the ethical systems, and of the social consequences of the ethnic faiths still seem to some of these a betrayal. To the two other classes above named the same attitude appears as a concession gladly to be made, nay, impossible to withhold. It is with a sense of shame that we realize the Christian intolerance which has often prevailed. It is with humiliation that we acknowledge tactical blunders, with chagrin that we confess obtuseness, conscientious obstinacy, and own that men have actually made a virtue of putting every question wrong end first. Men have demanded of those who would confess Christianity such an attitude of antagonism to ancestral faiths, to national and family tradition, to neutral and even trivial matters, that we must wonder that the number of confessors has been even so large as it has. We regret that the way of the convert has been made so needlessly difficult as it often was. We now feel that the spiritual elements in an indigenous faith should be joyfully embraced. Its ethical achievements and possibilities should be availed of. The points which unite us to the men to whom we preach should be dwelt on and utilized, before the points dividing us should be brought into view. This all belongs to a theory of missions and an approach to the missionary propaganda which seems to us so axiomatic that we can hardly make real to ourselves how new it is. We know how it is as between the sects at home. Those who indulge the hallucination that their own is the only saving church, dogma, or ritual, even though they be in all other contacts of life entirely well bred, verily think they serve God if in this they are insolently assertive, vulgarly arrogant, socially impossible, and intellectually ridiculous. The gentle Oriental has had much to suffer from the occidental emissary of salvation in this way. He must often have had cause to wonder over that curious state of western mind which would lead a man to leave his home and kin ostensibly, yes, really, to persuade others to listen to a revelation of love, and then permit him to assume a dogmatic attitude which almost precluded persuasion and made love and trust impossible.

But perhaps of even greater significance than this growing appreciation of the worth of the other religions has been an insight

which the last half-century has brought us into the nature of our own. The view of the nature and authority of Scripture has been transformed. This is true primarily of those who have been actually bred in the higher criticism. It is true also in surprising degree even of many who only late in life and in but partial measure have been made aware of that which critics claim. There has been a kind of contagion of the influence of the historic spirit even among those who possess for themselves little or nothing of the learning of the historian. To put it differently, there has been a subtle diffusion and wide influence of evolutionary views. It appears as axiomatic to minds of but very limited training that all things have had a development, have passed through stages of progress, have unfolded and been but gradually revealed. This dynamic view of all things in the universe, including the fact of religion and the essence of Christianity, is as instinctive with the modern man as was its contrary, the static view of these same matters three, or even two, generations ago. Therewith is virtually conceded the relativity of Christian doctrines, institutions, practices. Therewith was made obvious that these all had in them, besides their permanent factor, an element of that which was partial, passing, adapted to the time which produced them, necessarily giving place under the exigencies of a new time and in the conditions of a new environment. The Church Fathers had talked of a *preparatio evangelica*. It remained for Lessing to view the whole experience of humanity, but especially its religious experience, as an education of the human race. Revelation itself could not any longer be viewed as an *ab extra* communication, the imparting of mere information, as a third source of knowledge. It was necessarily viewed as experience, the experience of actual communion of the human spirit with the divine. The great revelation was personality. The documents of revelation are nothing but the deposit of some part of the characteristic impulse of that personality, the reminiscence of it, the interpretation of it, the comment upon it, with such fidelity as earnest men are capable of, but with such errors also and idiosyncrasies as nothing human ever quite escapes. There is no creed of Christendom, there is no dogma or system of theology, there is no ritual of worship, no rule of practice, which has

not this composite character, this relativity, this human body and parts. There is no tradition of the church which has not been made by the church so truly as it has then in turn done its part to help to make the church. There is no one of all these things which has been original or permanent in the sense in which ecclesiastics claim. There is no one of them which is identical with the whole truth, or which may be put forth as the sole truth. The form of Christianity which we inherit is so congenial to us largely because we are congenital with it. It moves our race as it does because it was made by our race, and has in turn in large part made our race. The Christianity which has really been potent in any given place and time has been that which was assimilated to the spirit of that place and time. The degree in which Christianity has conquered and transformed its environment is equaled only by the degree in which it has been conquered by, and assimilated to, its environment. Not merely do the petty distinctions between the Protestant sects tend to lose all significance and to disappear under this view. Even the great distinction between Catholic and Protestant is seen to have no meaning except in the light of a fundamental difference in human temperament. We know too well how all these things came to be to imagine that there is any need that they should continue to be or any probability that they will continue to be.

It is the same historic view which has re-created Old Testament studies and given us again a history of the people of Israel and of the literature and religion of Israel, truly critical indeed, but full of veneration for all that which the ancient covenant has meant to the world. It is the same view which compels us to see in the dogmatic and institutional and social developments of Islam most interesting and instructive parallels to corresponding phases of the evolution of Christianity. It is the same view which makes the investigations of primitive religion, so far as we are able to make any clear picture of the religion of primitive man, so immensely important for the understanding of Christianity itself. We see in certain aspects of current Christianity probable survivals of nature religion and of the religions of the law which antedated the emergence of the religion of redemption. Few would any longer contend that a religion is to be judged by its origins alone. Most would

assert that, on the contrary, the highest religions are to be estimated by their highest stages. Their whole essence is revealed only in the sum of all their racial and chronological manifestations. Of those which are still in progress of conquest in the world, something of their essence waits yet to be revealed. Could anything be more inspiring than such a view, more living and life-giving, more calculated to rouse enthusiasm, to quicken sympathy, and yet to send men back with more of unsparing eagerness to ascertain what our own Christianity really means? We seem to be saying over again after him that which the Master said: "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life." Could any interpretation be more consonant with the nature of that which we have gloried to describe as a religion of the spirit. The single point which we are here concerned to make is that such a view, instead of making the religious approach to non-Christian nations more difficult than before, makes it easier and more likely to be attended with a genuine success. It is that such a view, instead of making liberals indifferent to missions, is fitted to send them forth with new consecration to the task. It is that on this basis it is not possible for the truly liberal mind to withhold sympathy and co-operation from missions. It is that, on this basis, all the forces for good which are working in the world can really work together.

Take the vexed question of denominationalism. The various agencies for the Christian propaganda have, most of them, come into being in the circles of earnest souls within these denominations. Yet they are all seeking now to work in harmony one with another, to minimize differences, to accentuate agreements, to bring to pass actual union movements. Nothing is now so obvious as this tendency to union in endeavor. The various Protestant denominations have a background within the history of our own races, which is in some cases, at least, intelligible. They have no background in the experience of the races to which we carry Christianity. If they exist at all, they can exist only by imitation. They cannot continue to exist. We hope and expect that the Japanese Christian church will show us the example of a united Protestantism, perhaps even a united Christianity, through the elimination of differ-

ences which they will find it more easy to eliminate than do we. That is only an example of a movement which is actually taking place. In the mirror of the past one may read the present and the future. We hear much of the peril of syncretism. It does not admit of doubt that post-apostolic Christianity was syncretistic in fact and tendency. It does not admit of doubt that Roman Christianity was syncretistic and so also Teutonic Christianity in due time. That part of it which was too syncretistic died. We might add that that part of it also which was not sufficiently syncretistic died. That part of it in which the commingling of racial, local, temporal elements outweighed and corrupted the real religious content could not live. But that part in which there was not enough of these elements remained exotic, in other words, never really was alive. Only that part of it in which some kind of balance was achieved between the passing and the permanent, the partial and the universal, contained the seed of the future and flowered into a church both Christian and national, both national and Christian.

Great strain is put upon Christianity at the present moment, even in the very midst of Christendom. Not only has the whole mode of thought, the basis of reflection, changed in the extraordinary manner we have described. But the mode of life has changed in even more decisive manner. Man has gained more mastery over nature in a single century than in all the ages since the world began. Conditions of comfort, means for the gratification of ambition and taste and for the fulfilment of aspiration are enhanced. The world is more nearly a satisfying abode to a considerable portion of mankind. Men are more completely at home in it than they have ever been. The present absorbs us. The transcendent seems remote. The secular dulls the sense for the spiritual. Christianity itself must find restatement to meet that first difficulty and reinforcement to meet the second. There are at present signs that men are turning away in disillusionment from this self-sufficient and all-sufficient civilization in perception of the monstrous evils which are at the heart of it and in faith of the spiritual forces which alone can redeem us from it.

How much greater must be the strain in a land like, say India,

where a part of the population takes over with eagerness large elements of our western world-view, elements which have nothing to do with the fundamental principles of the Hindoo religion, nor the Hindoo religion with these. The cultivated and ambitious Indian looks to the development of his world much as does his English confrère. But Buddhism looks to no such development of the world, and Hindooism hardly more. The Indian is ashamed of some of the aspects of popular religion in his country. He is completely alienated from others. His whole point of view has changed. He cannot indeed forget that the Nazarene was an Oriental. But the Christianity which has been urged upon him has been so completely occidental, its identification with the western world-power and social order so entire, that he can as little find himself in this alien faith as in his own.

How much greater must be the tension in China where the Confucian ethic and the patriarchal system have immemorially sustained a proud culture and a morality and peace which command the admiration of the world. But that culture gave little of all that appears necessary to the maintenance of the national integrity of China in the midst of her aggressive foes. Peace is at an end, or at least war is the price of it. What is new possesses the imagination of the people. The homage for the old is scorned. No nation has ever presented such a spectacle as does China in its almost frantic effort to graft upon its ancient trunk the branches of a civilization which never sprang from its seed, and has little relation to what have been the fundamental principles of its life. The perils of such a transition can hardly be exaggerated. No simple panacea will do. In the intense self-consciousness of these newly quickened races, the offering in superior fashion of that which seems to them wholly alien is fairly sure to be futile and irritating besides. Surely never has a more subtle problem of religious influence been presented or one which would demand a higher wisdom or a larger grace. The young Turkish party which overthrew the old Sultan and established a constitutional government in the Ottoman Empire did so under the influence of European ideas and on the basis of a preparation in popular sentiment for which an education primarily offered by the Protestant mission colleges

was the clue. They are themselves, however, overwhelmingly convinced Moslems and convinced that Islam can be the religion of a modern state and an integral part of an essentially western culture and civilization. To us, it would seem that that can hardly be, except Islam shall itself be transformed in directions which would imply the influence of Christian principles.

Christianity is itself an Asiatic faith, although its long connection with European civilization tends to obscure that fact. The faith of the Semite has ruled the later Aryan world. Under conditions of world-wide traffic and communication as these exist today, its assimilation of the oriental world again to itself would be no more wonderful than was its assimilation of the motley group of peoples in the basin of the Mediterranean which the empire of the Caesars showed. Now as then a uniform and universal civilization practically implies a universal faith. Now as then the indigenous faiths can perpetuate themselves, even for a limited period side by side with the one which threatens to displace them, only by really meeting the universal problems of life, as this new faith is meeting them. So soon as it ceases to meet living problems its fate is sealed. It must give way to the religion which can meet them. After that, what of the indigenous faiths survives must survive within Christianity and not apart from it. But precisely so fragments of Latin and Teutonic religion survive in the Christianity which we know, while the vital spiritual element by which they survive is that which came from Judea and has for substance the revelation given in Jesus Christ.

The pioneers of missions had no such vision of the triumph of Christianity as this. Those for whose minds Christianity is always and only the Christianity of the past have no such vision now. But what is Christianity? Is it anything but that element of the pure spiritual intuition and enthusiasm of Jesus which, in composition with elements given in time and place and circumstance, did the work which a given race or era needed to have done? We may be only too deeply and justly depressed at the sight of what is sordid and brutal in our western civilization, shocked at its vices and crimes, humiliated at the miseries and the sins it leaves almost untouched. But the time is gone by when we could wish that the



Oriental might not come in contact with it. He desires that contact. He desires nothing so much. In his haste he imitates much that is worst, as if he had not already full measure of that which is bad of his own. The one thing that we can now do about it is to see that he comes in contact also with that which in our civilization is the best and the source of all that is best. The one thing that we can now do about it is to offer that which, as we see it, is the saving element within our own civilization. We must offer it to him in such a manner that he can really make it his own. The only thing that we can do about it is to offer him our own faith, not indeed as the only faith by which God has ever drawn near to men. We may offer it as the faith which has gone farther than has any other in adjustment to the civilization which he seems bound to have. It is the faith which, on the witness of the last two thousand years, has, on the whole, carried men farthest, comprehended most and fostered best the life of the soul by the things of the eternal world.

There are those to whom such a view does not appeal so much as does a simple mandate. The answer is that there are those also to whom it appeals far more. There will be those on the field to whom the absolutist view, which would simply substitute one faith for another, is more cogent and effective. The simple life permits of simple solutions. There are others to whom some such view as that I have suggested affords the only basis upon which the transition from one faith to another is conceivable. The Christianity of Paul met for the most part simple people. The early missionaries for the most part met simple people too. The propaganda in the age of the apologists met a very different problem. So do we, in the world situation which I have above described. The Christian apologetic must be forever framed anew. Now, as of old, it will often be the converts who will teach us how to frame it. Men like Justin and Clement show the value of the schooling through which they had passed. It would be pitiable indeed should the man who sees one need decry the man who is able to meet another. We are all members of one body, which body is the church of Christ, wherein is neither Jew nor Gentile, Greek nor barbarian, bond nor free. So only that we are joined everyone to Christ, who is the head, the

hand cannot say to the eye, I have no need of you. There is that in the cause of Christ and for the furtherance of the Kingdom which the very simplest can do. But surely we have said enough to show that there is that also in the cause of missions which the simplest cannot do. There is that which only the man who has qualities which a true liberalism gives him can do. There is that which only such a man will undertake, which is yet very necessary to be undertaken. There is that in the doing of which he has an advantage, with which nothing which the other man possesses can compare. There is that which constitutes his peculiar challenge. Upon this it would be indeed a pity if there were no chance for him to offer up his heart and life.